

Chronic Absenteeism Reduction Effort

# Communities Can Address Chronic Absenteeism Through Partnerships Between Educators and Healthcare Providers



Chronic absenteeism—**defined as missing 10% or more of the school year**—can affect any student, in any grade. It can also put the health of students at risk.

**What if educators and healthcare providers could work together to keep kids in school?**



One of the most effective strategies for providing pathways out of poverty is to support strong attendance and address the causes of absenteeism.<sup>1</sup>

Poor health and missed school compromise the efforts of school districts, schools and teachers. If health problems compromise students' attendance and ability to learn, the overall benefits of key educational efforts such as teacher preparation, financing, and curriculum are jeopardized.

Absenteeism is a leading indicator of educational inequity. Often, students miss school because of mental and physical health conditions or socioeconomic and environmental factors. Research shows youth of color, youth from low-income backgrounds, and youth who have experienced trauma are four times more likely to be chronically absent.

## Top Health Reasons Kids Miss Too Much School<sup>2</sup>

- > **Asthma**
- > **Oral health and dental pain**
- > **Influenza**
- > **Anxiety**
- > **Depression**
- > **Parents' physical or mental health**
- > **Type I and II diabetes mellitus**
- > **Seizure disorders**
- > **Obesity**

Over **80% of health outcomes** are driven by the impact of socioeconomic and environmental factors—such as being exposed to trauma, not having stable housing, or not having access to food, transportation and healthcare.

1. Balfanz Robert, and Vaughan Byrne. The Importance of Being in School, A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. 2012; (May):1-46.

2. Mandy A. Allison, Elliott Attisha, Council On School Health (2019). The Link Between School Attendance and Good Health. Pediatrics Feb 2019, 143 (2) e20183648; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2018-3648.

**Healthcare providers and schools serve the same kids.** And healthcare providers can identify and manage the very conditions that often keep kids from being able to go to school.


That makes healthcare providers key partners for schools in efforts to prevent chronic absenteeism and intervene when it happens.

By including community healthcare providers on local school health councils and engaging families and youth in planning, schools will be better equipped to tackle the barriers students and families face. Connecting schools and local providers on high volume requests such as sports physicals, back to school immunizations, flu shot clinics and now COVID testing and vaccines can further strengthen ties between the two sectors.

With existing data infrastructure, strong partnerships between the healthcare and education sectors, a thoughtful approach to gathering parental consent, and consistent outreach to families, healthcare providers and schools can work together to address children's health needs and reduce absenteeism.

**The Chronic Absenteeism Reduction Effort (CARE) project**, piloted in Washington, D.C., builds partnerships between the health and education sectors and informs healthcare providers about chronic absenteeism using secure data sharing.

Through this novel initiative, healthcare providers and educators work together to reach out to families and provide resources and medical attention, as needed.



**Until CARE, I didn't do a very good job of asking how many days of school children missed. Asking simple questions like 'are you going to school?' and then knowing how to respond is important. I had a patient who mentioned that they hadn't been to school in two months, so it's critical to have systems in place to help patients**

HEALTHCARE PROVIDER PARTICIPATING IN CARE